

THE STONE AGE OF QEQERTARSUUP TUNUA (DISKO BUGT): A REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE SAQQAQ AND DORSET CULTURES OF CENTRAL WEST GREENLAND. By JENS FOG JENSEN. Copenhagen: SILA and The Commission for Scientific Research in Greenland, 2006. *Meddelelser om Grønland, Man & Society* 32. ISBN 87-90369-82-3. 272 p., maps, b&w and colour illus., bib. Hardbound. DKK 298.

The basis for this book is Jens Fog Jensen's University of Copenhagen doctoral dissertation, *Tents, Rings, and Stone Tools* (2005), making this a timely publication of his investigations of Palaeoeskimo cultures relative to other recent monographs in the *Man and Society* volumes on the prehistory of Greenland.

The author's investigations are noted as a deliberate methodological break from more traditional Danish archaeology of Greenlandic sites, which largely concerned culture history derived from the vertical analyses of stratigraphic relationships. In contrast, Jensen presents a Palaeoeskimo prehistory from a horizontal perspective, through the presentation and analysis of inter- and intra-site patterns of Dorset and Saqqaq land use in central West Greenland. Notwithstanding this break, Jensen's work integrates archaeology with geography and geology and is consistent with a strong, multidisciplinary approach that has a long history in Danish archaeology.

The volume is divided into 10 chapters. The first four provide an introduction and comprehensive discussions of landscape, seascape and icescape, environmental change, and the history of previous research. More specifically, this volume examines Palaeoeskimo settlement patterns from 225 known sites within the four regions of Qeqertarsuup Tunua. Differences between these regions are argued to be a result of temporal differences and geographic differences related to availability of geological and ecological resources. The mapping and documentation of sites and the presentation of primary data are well executed, and a catalogue of the sites is extensively documented in an Appendix. As noted from other *Meddelelser om Grønland* publications, the publication of such primary data, while encyclopedic in format, provides a significant resource for Arctic research. This is especially true considering the broad geographical and cultural differences of the Arctic as a place of study, and in view of the sometimes parallel histories of research that have resulted from differing national approaches to archaeology. While some of these differences, such as the relationship between Independence II and the Dorset culture, continue to divide opinion on basic issues of culture history, Jensen's work promotes more recent endeavors to bridge such gaps.

The results of Jensen's archaeological investigation and the data that support the central theme of this publication are presented and discussed in chapters 6 through 8. Reports on Saqqaq and Dorset settlements in southern Qeqertarsuup Tunua are expertly presented in detail within these chapters. Site locations, features, and artifact

descriptions are nicely presented by means of site maps, plan views, stratigraphic profiles, colour photographs, and drawings of site reconstruction. Colour photography and figure reproduction are of excellent quality, which enhances the value of both the publication and the data presented within.

Of particular interest to this reviewer is a brief, albeit informative chapter on the use and distribution of stone. Killiaq, which is the predominant lithic material in the Saqqaq toolkit, and chalcedony, the chief lithic material associated with Dorset sites in Western Greenland, are the intended topics of this chapter. However, in view of the lack of known chalcedony sources to test Dorset models, Jensen's assessment is basically limited to the procurement and distribution of killiaq. While Jensen and Petersen (1998) previously proposed that the distribution of raw materials from the extraction sites of Qaarsut and Angissat had both local and regional functions, Jensen uses thin sectioning in this chapter to differentiate between raw materials. He further combines these results with observations about blank production to test their earlier assumptions.

This volume also contains a valuable examination of radiocarbon results from West Greenland. These results are tabulated and used to establish and explore variation in Palaeoeskimo occupations within the study area. The author suggests that the previously uncritical use of some of these results has led to inaccurate conclusions. He notes, for example, that since all of the latest Saqqaq dates from Sisimiut originate from a single locality, that the interpretation of such evidence for continuity between Dorset and Saqqaq cultures should, at present, be restricted to the Sisimiut region. The discussion of radiocarbon dates is a continuing debate in Arctic archaeology, and one that is acutely applicable where cultural contemporaneity is concerned.

The final chapter provides a summary of results and a discussion of Saqqaq and Dorset differences in Qeqertarsuup Tunua and discusses the present state of knowledge regarding the Saqqaq-Dorset relationships. A discussion of the archaeological evidence is also considered in a broader regional context in view of the problem of seemingly parallel Independence I and Independence II cultures in Peary Land. This summary provides a valuable review of the continuing debate of culture history pertaining to the relationships between the Independence I and Saqqaq cultures, as well as between the Dorset and Independence II cultures.

Like other recent volumes of *Meddelelser om Grønland*, *The Stone Age of Qeqertarsuup Tunua (Disko Bugt)* by Jens Fog Jensen is another first-class publication, which should be of primary interest to scholars of Arctic prehistory. In particular, this volume is an essential resource for specialists in Dorset and Saqqaq archaeology, and especially for those who seek to better understand the relationship between Canadian and Danish approaches to archaeological research and the prehistory of the Arctic.

REFERENCE

- JENSEN, J.F., and PETERSEN, B. 1998. Raw material distribution: Social space, social interaction. *Acta Borealia* 15(2):139–152.

John C. Erwin
Department of Anthropology
Archaeology Unit, Queen's College
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Newfoundland A1C 5S7, Canada
jerwin@mun.ca